

High School Dublin Parent's Association

Annual General Meeting

High School, 23 September 2019

Attendees:

PA Cttee: Nigel Donovan (Chair), Gavin O'Duffy (Secretary), Vincent Landy, Ray Stewart, Elaine Costello, Evelyn Foley, Linda O'Connor, Steve Wilson

Apologies: Birgitta Lee

Parents: Approximately 60 parents were in attendance.

Minutes

The meeting started at 8:15pm as people were still arriving.

Introductions - Nigel

- Welcomed everyone to the meeting
- Introduced the PA, mentioned 14 kids between us
- Each rep introduced themselves and their role (year rep and/or committee rep) and also briefly mentioned details of children they have in school
- Outlined the agenda ahead for the meeting

Parent's Association Introduction

- Mission & Organization
- Assist with Communications between parents and the school
- Welfare / Sport / Education support
- Activities organized to develop and promote the school community
- Liaise on policy via sub-committees
- Participate with COMPASS

Details on Communications

- Nigel gave an overview of the situation, scale, channels
- He talked about process to ensure that parents voice is heard
- Nigel acknowledged that school's response does not always meet our expectations, for example, things can go slower than we would like
- Reminded parents that HSD PA use Facebook and Twitter to keep parents in the loop with regular updates
- Website and email details were displayed

Activities support & promotion

Support and promotion of activities to foster school community, such as these listed below:

- Sport and non-sport activities support eg Lego Club
- Junior Cert Paintball
- Speaker sessions for parents
- 1st year parent icebreaker
- Year-end social
- Support Parent/Teacher meetings
- Book/Uniform sale

Focus for 2019/2020 school year

- 1) Communications – evolved process/framework – when/what/why?
 - a) Main activity for Nigel, almost daily engagement with school
 - b) Described new initiative involving deputy principals, teachers and PA reps
 - c) Principal has agreed to more frequent communications
 - d)
- 2) Policy – we will continue to engage, we will ask you as a body what points you want brought up.
- 3) Student Council
 - a) Believe it could be tighter, more inclusive approach desired for the year ahead
 - b) Ties back to the communications issues
- 4) Speaker Sessions
 - a) Propose Study Skills, Mental Wellness, Cracking the college code
 - b) We will give you plenty of notice for these talks, email the what/when/where
 - c) If there are things you would like to see, let us know
- 5) Social Activity
 - a) Ice breakers, Year-end social etc. If there are things you would like to see, let us know
- 6) Compliance
 - a) Registering as a charity, believe we doing all the right things already.

Asks

- Want all parents to engage with us via the rep, using the PA channels – email/FB/Twitter
- Tell us what you want (bear in mind the school is not like the private sector)
- Tell us about the speaker line up
- Give us feedback

Rules / Constitutional Amendment

Nigel advised parents on the background of a recent PA rule change which is needed to reflect latest national guidelines for charities (The PA is categorized as a charity with an all-volunteer staff). We want to ensure we updated our constitution to ensure that we have the right structure and the correct level of transparency.

Financial Report

Evelyn walked through the financial statement, briefly explaining each line item in the receipts and payments sections

- Mentioned Study Clix contribution will increase from 330 to 1500 as it rolls out
- Listed different events / clubs that seek sponsorship
- Summarized the balance situation

Q&A from parents:

Q. Who decides the amount for Study Clix

A. Nigel explained that the Deputy Principal will make a request for support, estimated it will be 1200-1500

Q. What is Study Clix?

A. Nigel explained the idea, the benefits seen to date and said that more info / background

Q. Why does the PA fund the software?

A. Historical

Q. How can we get more access to teachers? Why am I only getting to see a sub-set of teachers? As a fee paying school we should get to meet all the teachers.

A. This is a supply issue, not demand. We can bring this up with the school that parents would like the option to meet all teachers.

Parent Comment: SW seems to work very well, no queueing

Q. Where do the requests for PA financial support come from?

A. We get requests from parents, from staff, and directly from students.

Q. How can we get encourage more students to come directly, it's good for their confidence

A. We can work with Student Assemblies. Elaine will push out a message in Assembly

Q. Would a standard form work well?

A. Yes, agreed, we will look into this and make it available at the office

Review of Any Other Business from last year's AGM

1. Mobile Phone Policy: Despite being informed by the PA that this is one of the highest priority concerns articulated by parents, the school has not appeared to have definitively progressed on this issue. The code of conduct has described a new policy but in practice it is not being uniformly implemented (eg some teachers asking students to take out their phones).

Q&A from parents:

Q. The Code of Conduct has been updated to say phones should be in the lockers but not being enforced uniformly. Some teachers are asking students to take photos of notes/homework.

A. The PA will bring up the question/concern with the school. There is a communication due out shortly on digital strategy

Q. Why is the issue being conflated with digital device strategy?

A. We are not sure exactly why the school is choosing to do this.

Q. It seemed like nothing has happened here in 12 months, they are not phones but mini-computers / mini-entertainment devices.

A. The topic was brought up frequently with the school but things move slowly. It's not seen by the school as an urgent problem

Q. Could the PA conduct a survey to get feedback to the school?

A. It's on the school to conduct the survey according to the department of education.

Q. There was an almost universal show of hand last year, that this was the no. 1 issue. It's very disappointing outcome to see.

A. PA will communicate the disappointment of the parents back to the school. Evelyn explained that it was brought up at the board of management in June and the plan was to survey the parents in the summer but it obviously didn't happen. This will be raised in the next October board meeting.

Points requiring follow up from the PA

- The Studyclix approach – what and why – value proposition
- PT meetings – why is it not possible to see all teachers – question for school mgmt.
- Student awards wider net – ensure all parents are aware and have year reps actively search for inputs
- Phone policy – consistency in management and next steps – question for school mgmt.

PA Committee Update

As previously advised, three PA committee members, Vincent, Joyce and Melody have reached the end of their term and are stepping down. The PA committee therefore is seeking three new parents to volunteer to join the committee, ideally with some representation from the 1st year body.

Three people (Susannah Love, Avril Robinson, Debo Adeduntan) who had volunteered were identified and election of 3 volunteers was approved unanimously. Roles on the committee for the new members will be discussed and decided at the next PA meeting.

The meeting concluded at 9:30pm and was followed by a tea/coffee reception in the lunch hall.